

CONSUMER COUNTER-TACTICS

FIELD PROTOCOL #B2

SHADY SHOP RED FLAGS & COUNTER-SCRIPTS

8 Cut-Out Glovebox Flashcards & Dispute Blueprints to Stop High-Pressure Upsells Instantly

By Earl Vance • 42 Years of Independent Garage Bench Defense • Earl's Garage

HOW SERVICE COUNTER COMMISSIONS ACTUALLY WORK:

Most vehicle owners assume the friendly person in the polo shirt behind the dealership or franchise counter is a salaried master technician offering neutral mechanical advice. In reality, his job title is **Service Advisor (or Service Writer)**, and in the vast majority of corporate chains, his compensation is heavily tied to **Average Repair Order (ARO) dollar value** and monthly "spiff" bonuses on high-margin fluid flushes, cabin filters, and chemical additives.

THE 3 CLASSIC HIGH-PRESSURE SERVICE COUNTER TRAPS:

TRAP #1: THE "\$29.99 OIL CHANGE" LOSS-LEADER INSPECTION

A shop barely breaks even on a coupon oil change once synthetic oil, filter, and bay time are counted. The coupon exists to get your car raised on the hydraulic lift so the advisor can walk into the waiting room with a tablet showing \$650 to \$1,400 in "urgent red-zone maintenance" before they lower your car.

TRAP #2: THE "PARTS CANNON" (REPLACING ASSEMBLIES INSTEAD OF DIAGNOSING)

Instead of spending 20 minutes testing a single relay, O-ring, or ignition coil, high-volume shops quote replacing all 4 or 6 coils, spark plugs, sensors, and wiring harnesses as a "complete package" — shifting 100% of their diagnostic guesswork onto your credit card.

TRAP #3: THE EMOTIONAL "SAFETY GUILT" CLOSE

Phrases like *"I wouldn't let my own wife or grandkids drive this car home today"* are trained sales closes designed to trigger fear and stop you from asking for objective millimeter measurements or taking the car for a second opinion.

HOW TO USE PAGES 2 & 3 OF THIS BONUS:

Print Pages 2 and 3, cut along the dotted lines, and clip the 8 flashcards inside your glovebox folder.

8 FLASHCARDS

CUT-OUT GLOVEBOX CARDS (PART 1)

WORD-FOR-WORD SERVICE COUNTER FLASHCARDS (#1–#4)

✂ FLASHCARD #1: ENGINE & CABIN AIR FILTER UPSELL

THEY SAY: "Your engine and cabin air filters are dirty — we can replace both right now for \$115 to \$165."

YOU SAY: "Please put my original filters back in. Federal DOE/EPA studies confirm that on modern fuel-injected engines, a lightly dusty air filter does not reduce fuel economy (MPG). I buy OEM-spec filters myself for \$15 and swap them in 3 minutes with zero labor."

✂ FLASHCARD #2: HIGH-PRESSURE TRANSMISSION MACHINE FLUSH

THEY SAY: "Your transmission fluid looks dark — you need our \$290 heated machine power-flush today."

YOU SAY: "Decline the machine flush. Many automaker technical bulletins caution against high-pressure chemical flush machines on older transmissions because they can dislodge settled clutch material into valve body passages. I only authorize a gentle gravity drain-and-fill using exact OEM-spec fluid."

✂ FLASHCARD #3: THE "BRAKES ARE AT 30%" PERCENTAGE SCARE

THEY SAY: "Your brake pads are down to 30%! It's unsafe to drive home without a \$580 pad and rotor job."

YOU SAY: "Brake pads are measured in millimeters, not percentages. Please write down the exact millimeter reading for both the inner and outer pads on my estimate. Industry wear limit is 2mm (and 3mm is the prudent service replacement target). If they are at 4.5mm to 5mm, please reinstall my wheels."

✂ FLASHCARD #4: \$190 CHEMICAL FUEL INDUCTION SERVICE

THEY SAY: "We need to run our \$190 3-step fuel injector and throttle body chemical decarbonization kit."

YOU SAY: "Decline unless there is a specific drivability trouble code. I fuel up with Top Tier detergent gasoline (which meets OEM polyetheramine detergent standards) and add a \$9 bottle of PEA fuel system cleaner at oil changes. (Note: On GDI engines, I only approve intake cleaning if carbon misfires occur.)"

CUT-OUT GLOVEBOX CARDS (PART 2)

WORD-FOR-WORD SERVICE COUNTER FLASHCARDS (#5–
#8)

✂ FLASHCARD #5: THE "VOID FACTORY WARRANTY" THREAT

THEY SAY: "If you don't perform our dealership 30,000-mile package here, your factory warranty is voided!"

YOU SAY: "Under the federal Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act (15 U.S.C. § 2302(c)), tie-in sales provisions are prohibited. You cannot void my warranty simply because routine maintenance was performed at an independent shop or by myself, unless you prove an improper part or service directly caused a failure."

✂ FLASHCARD #6: DOUBLE-BILLED OVERLAPPING LABOR HOURS

THEY SAY: "Timing belt labor is 4.0 hours and water pump labor is 3.5 hours — that's 7.5 hours total (\$1,350)."

YOU SAY: "Please check your Alldata or Mitchell1 flat-rate labor guide for 'Combination / Overlap Labor.' Once the timing belt cover is off, the water pump is right there in plain sight. I will gladly pay for the water pump part and any 0.3–0.5 hr combination labor, not two separate teardowns."

✂ FLASHCARD #7: NORMAL STRUT WEEPING VS. ACTIVE LEAK

THEY SAY: "We see a thin film of oil mist on your shock absorber — you need all 4 struts replaced (\$1,100)."

YOU SAY: "Suspension manufacturer inspection bulletins (including KYB and Monroe) distinguish between normal seal lubrication misting around the upper dust boot and an active hydraulic leak dripping down to the lower spring perch. If the car passes the bounce test and isn't dripping, leave them alone."

✂ FLASHCARD #8: UNAUTHORIZED DISASSEMBLY / TEARDOWN FEE

THEY SAY: "We took your intake apart to inspect it — if you decline our \$1,800 repair, you owe \$450 to put it back."

YOU SAY: "My signed work order authorized a diagnostic scan only, not mechanical teardown. Performing unapproved disassembly violates state motor vehicle repair statutes and breaches our service contract. Reassemble my vehicle to its drop-off condition at the originally agreed diagnostic fee, or I will pay under written protest on my credit card and file a formal complaint with the State Attorney General and State Motor Vehicle Repair Board."

CONSUMER ESCALATION PROTOCOL

CREDIT CARD CHARGEBACK & CERTIFIED DEMAND LETTER

TEMPLATE

HOW TO RECOVER YOUR CAR & DISPUTE UNAUTHORIZED CHARGES LEGALLY:

Step 1 (Never Leave Your Car Hostage): If a shop refuses to release your keys without payment for unauthorized work, write "PAID UNDER PROTEST — UNAUTHORIZED CHARGES" above your signature, pay with a major **Credit Card** (never cash, Zelle, or debit), and drive your car home.

Step 2 (Certified Written Notice): Mail the completed demand letter below via **USPS Certified Mail with Return Receipt Requested** and submit a copy to your credit card issuer under the Fair Credit Billing Act (FCBA) and your State Attorney General Consumer Protection Division.

FORMAL NOTICE OF DISPUTED REPAIR CHARGES & DEMAND FOR REFUND

SEND VIA USPS CERTIFIED MAIL

TO (SHOP NAME): _____	DATE OF NOTICE: _____
SHOP ADDRESS: _____	REPAIR ORDER #: _____
VEHICLE Y/M/M: _____	VIN (17 DIGITS): _____

Dear Service Manager / Business Owner:

On **[Date of Service]**, I delivered my vehicle to your facility with a written initial estimate of **\$(Initial Estimate)**. Your facility subsequently billed **\$(Final Billed Amount)** — including **\$(Disputed Amount)** for work or parts that were either never authorized in writing as required by state motor vehicle repair regulations, or failed to resolve the diagnosed issue.

Pursuant to state consumer protection statutes governing automotive repair disclosures and written authorization requirements, **I hereby request a refund/credit of \$(Disputed Amount) to my original form of payment within ten (10) business days of receipt of this notice.**

If this matter is not resolved within ten (10) business days, I will forward this documentation — along with copies of the work order, invoices, and inspection records — to the **State Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division**, the state motor vehicle repair regulatory board, my credit card issuer's dispute department, and Small Claims Court.

VEHICLE OWNER SIGNATURE: _____
PRINTED NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____
PHONE / EMAIL: _____